



Riverview Elementary School

271 E. Belvidere Street

St. Paul, MN 55107

Principal: Elizabeth Heffernan

Riverview Elementary School provides rich support for language development in both English and Spanish through the use of a research-based comprehensive school reform program. Though mainly an English immersion school, they have started to offer an elective bilingual program, with students starting out in kindergarten with 90% Spanish and 10%

English, and gradually transitioning to more English as they advance in grades. Within the framework of the model and across all classes, well-structured cooperative learning is used effectively to increase students' use of oral language and vocabulary development as well as to increase motivation and student engagement in learning.

With cooperative learning used from kindergarten on, students quickly learn the protocol so teachers in all grades can use cooperative learning as an effective, efficient strategy for teaching literacy. Students learn strategies such as Think Pair Share, where first they are asked to think something over on their own, then asked to pair with a partner to talk about their answers, and then finally to share out with the whole group. This strategy allows for both individual accountability and group accountability. Another well-known protocol is "peanut butter and jelly," where one student assumes the assigned "peanut butter" responsibilities and the other those of the "jelly" group.

Within pairs, students learn to employ certain strategies to assist their partner. For example, if a student comes to a word he/she doesn't know, a partner might say "Can you sound it out?" or "Do you know the first sound?" Students are taught to support their partner to find the answer, not to provide them with it. Another strategy they are taught for pair work is that when they're finished reading a

- ◆ Elementary (K-3)
- ◆ 45% Hispanic
- ◆ 27% Black
- ◆ 15% Asian
- ◆ 10% White
- ◆ 51% English Language Learners
- ◆ 88% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch



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page, one person gives a little summary and the other partner adds another detail, and they go back and forth until they are satisfied.

Classroom teachers are supported in this work by a reading facilitator as well as three certified ESL teachers who visit classrooms during daily 90-minute reading blocks, as well as during writers' workshops. ESL teachers also offer a separate reading block for students who need more individualized attention. Students are also given 20-minute individualized tutoring sessions if needed (about 30% of first graders); starting in January, some of these sessions become combined small-group study sessions focusing on specific reading skills needed for the state test administered in the spring. For the youngest students, the district provides language development instruction in which targeted English learners are given "an extra boost in learning," according to the principal, through a half-day pullout program.